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Jane Tiffany Wagner

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Broadcast Designing

Enriches Homemaking Programs

Jane Tiffany Wagner, '27, Director of Home Economics for NBC, pictures radio home economics in a reprint from American Cookery

HOME Economics broadcasting is like making bread. It takes many good ingredients, scientific blending and a good taste sense to make the finished product that perfect something we thoroughly enjoy.

When radio entered the field of homemaking many an experienced homemaker questioned its place. How could radio help us, the homemakers of the world asked. It was not a matter of just reading new recipes, giving new tables on caloric or vitamin value. It took upon itself the task of bringing to radio listeners a wealth of information that is specialized knowledge.

Making a home is one of the most important things in all the world. But no home is better than its inhabitants. They must be adequately fed, properly clothed, securely sheltered in an atmosphere of understanding, harmony and fun. How they live depends entirely upon the homemaker's ability to make much out of little in many cases, and in others to appreciate the elements present in each home.

Radio did some experimenting. Did radio listeners learn more by the lecture method, or by question and answer by way of letters? Could the laughter of happy people be projected into a radio broadcast that could teach and entertain at the same time? Radio has tried them all. They all work to an amazing degree.

As a concrete example let's go behind the microphone at the National Broadcasting Company and see what happens in a homemaking broadcast. In a remote corner, far from a control booth, there is someone with a program idea. That idea has come after many hours of research by a graduate Home Economist into *one* branch of homemaking. Hundreds of letters are read from radio listeners, current homemaking problems are reviewed, and the idea takes form. Food—that's it. But food is rationed, there are shortages, there are high prices, the element of time in preparation must be considered because many home cooks are working for peace.

Then there is the question of the listener's attitude. Will she be tired—need relaxation instead of a serious lecture? A cross section of the listeners of the NBC University of the Air program, "Home Is What You Make It" (Saturdays at 9 to 9:30 a.m., E.S.T.), revealed by hundreds of letters from all parts of the United States, shows that they cannot be put into one category. They cannot all be labeled as a group of devotees of humor exclusively. It is true that by eliminating the element of strain in listening, the ear hears more, and the mind absorbs more quickly. The test of the pro-

gram comes when the listener can perform a home task and still concentrate upon what she is hearing.

The combination of the serious with the light, the introduction of reality into the fantasy of the scriptwriter's work, is the ideal. The time of day when the program is aired is most important, and it is one deciding factor of context of any script. But urban and rural listeners of homemaking broadcasts have one major field of common interest which helps to solve the problem of diverse interests of each group. They are listening to a program about *homemaking*. It is nearest and dearest to their hearts. They have to feed and clothe their families, and they are open to new ways to perform these daily tasks. A menu suggested on a broadcast can tickle the palate of farm wife or city wife. The only difference in the majority of recipes for each wife is that the farm wife may grow more of her food, whereas her city equal must buy it in stores—and usually out of cans. . .

The method of preparation of that menu in either locale is identical. Quantities of ingredients may have to be increased because families vary in size, but fundamentally large cakes or small cakes are identical.

EACH homemaker is ready and willing to listen to something worth listening to. The modern woman is a realist. She is wise to the ways of the high pressure salesman. She is intelligent and willing to add to her knowledge, providing that knowledge is based on fact. Documentary material may be placed in a make-believe setting, but it must ring with the positive clang of practicability. Every problem of homemaking is real, there is no make believe in running a home properly.

So then the mountains of research material—because food is an age-old problem which supplies quantities of little known data and interesting fact—are sorted and the basis of the program begins to take shape. A happy family is usually a well-fed family, so what could be better than building the program around a family? How about a few laughs that every family has, the time that small Betty made her first cake—and who invented a cake in the first place?

The script writer gets busy on building a sequence of events that makes a radio drama, built around food. The family has a budget, they have a garden, they like picnics and birthday parties. They also have to cope with school lunches, shortages and poor appetites. . .

So the drama begins in a home. As the homemaker listens she recognizes the problems she faces every day. Radio education in homemaking now can walk into her kitchen and demonstrate by example just what can be done with the garden vegetables, how the picnic can be appetizing with a new way to grill

a frankfurter, a veal cutlet, or baking a fish in the silvery-green leaves of an ear of corn deep down in the coals.

THE living of a family on the air is not much different from the family that is hearing about it on their radio. And, besides that picture of a radio family wrestling with its problem, supplies just enough of the humorous side of living so that Mother's job

documentary information that took weeks and months of research, and yet was presented in half hour programs.

This year, "Home Is What You Make It" will enlarge its program to include many angles of home-making that were never worked into radio drama. The family with a new baby finds itself on a schedule almost as strict as the infant's. How can the mother plan her day so that her baby is sure of getting the many attentions required, and her other children and her husband be assured of appetizing meals, a well-



Across the desk of Jane Tiffany Wagner, '27, pass the scripts for all NBC broadcasts directed toward homemakers. To supplement the material in the programs she prepares special booklets

becomes a career in itself. The element of laughter, good fun, suggestion of what can be done, how kitchen tasks can be delegated to members of the family begins to remove the drudgery of "standing over a hot stove."

The young daughter or young son will enjoy listening—and in spite of themselves learn something. It isn't just Mother that makes a picnic. Nor is it just Dad who supplies the financial aid to pay for the ingredients that made the cake. It's the family working together as a unit enjoying the preparation of the picnic as much as the outing itself.

The summer series of programs was built around many of our Allied neighbors. Customs of the Dutch, the Australians, the Belgians and the Norwegians, as well as a glimpse into their kitchens provided the opportunity for American homemakers to understand the heritage of our neighbors all over the world. The strange foods which we look upon as "novel" dishes in these foreign countries are neither "company menus" nor exotic. They are foods suitable to the climates, the vegetation, and the needs of the people who eat them.

The American homemaker, after listening to any of the programs of this group, acquired a quantity of

managed house graciously reigned over by a happy person? These problems supply enough material for dozens of programs, and radio is finding the way of presenting them in concise, entertaining form. To supplement each of its homemaking broadcasts, NBC will issue handbooks, for a very small charge, written by some of the most outstanding authorities in the home economics field. There will be one on food, one on clothing, another on shelter, another on family relationship and one on children. And knowing that the health of the family, its civic and cultural interests play such an important role in the happiness of each member of the home, programs will be built around these subjects and a corresponding handbook prepared.

Homes are built with loving hands, thoughtful care and happy hearts. They do not subsist on bread alone, nor the labors of just one. Radio is moving to the front to show homelovers that "Home Is What You Make It"—from breakfast to bedtime.

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